



YOUR CHANUKAH GUIDE

Kislev 25-Tevet 2, 5756 ח"ב Dec. 17-25, 1995



The Miracle of Chanukah—Olive Oil

AN INTRODUCTION

Chanukah—the Festival of Lights—is among the most widely celebrated of Jewish holidays. It is a time for happy family gatherings around the menorah, for children's songs and sizzling potato latkes and games of 'dreidel'. For many of us, it brings back fond memories of childhood, or serves to renew our sense of Jewish identity.

Yet Chanukah is rarely appreciated for its full significance. What are its deeper teachings, its historical origins, its relevance for today? Surely Chanukah means more than just kids' parties or nostalgia for times gone by.

Your Chanukah Guide is designed to provide the practical details as well as some insights into the 'inner dimension' of Chanukah observance. We hope it serves you well.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The History of Chanukah	3
The Temple Menorah	7
The Menorah Kindling Calendar	8
<i>Instructions on Kindling the Menorah</i>	
The Significance of Chanukah	10
Special Customs of Chanukah	14
The Chanukah Dreidel	15

Note: This brochure contains sacred writings; please do not desecrate it. However, it is not considered Shames.

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THE HISTORY OF CHANUKAH



Under Syrian Rule

It was in the time of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, nearly twenty-two centuries ago, that the events took place which we commemorate each year at Chanukah time.

The Jewish people had returned to the land of Israel from the Babylonian Exile, and had rebuilt the Holy Temple. But they remained subject to the domination of imperial powers—first, the Persian Empire, then later, the conquering armies of Alexander the Great. Upon the death of Alexander, his vast kingdom was divided among his generals. After a power struggle which engulfed all the nations of the Middle East, Israel found itself under the sway of the Seleucid Dynasty—Greek kings who reigned from Syria.

Alexander Bows to the High Priest

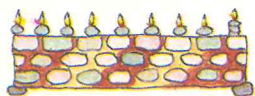
The Talmud relates that when Alexander the Great and his conquering legions advanced upon Jerusalem, they were met by a delegation of elders, led by the High Priest Shimon HaTzaddik. When Alexander saw Shimon approaching, he dismounted and prostrated himself before the Jewish sage.

To his astonished men, Alexander explained that each time he went into battle, he would see a vision in the likeness of this High Priest lead-

ing the Greek troops to victory.

In gratitude, and out of profound respect for the spiritual power of the Jews, Alexander was a kind and generous ruler. He canceled the Jewish taxes during Sabbatical years, and even offered animals to be sacrificed on his behalf in the Temple.

Unfortunately, history would prove that Alexander's heirs failed to sustain his benevolence.



THE HISTORY OF CHANUKAH

The 'Madman'

Though at first, the rule of the Seleucids was rather benign, there soon arose a new king, Antiochus IV, who was to wage a bloody war upon the Jews—a war which would threaten not just their physical lives, but their very spiritual existence.

Over the years of Greek domination, many Jews had begun to embrace the Greek culture and its hedonistic, pagan way of life. These Jewish Hellenists became willing pawns in Antiochus' scheme to obliterate every trace of the Jewish religion. The Holy Temple was in-

vaded, desecrated, and robbed of all its treasures. Vast numbers of innocent people were massacred, and the survivors were heavily taxed. Antiochus placed an idol of Zeus on the holy altar, and forced the Jews to bow before it under penalty of death. And he forbade the Jewish people to observe their most sacred traditions, such as the Sabbath, and the rite of circumcision.

Antiochus went so far as to proclaim himself a god, taking the name '*Antiochus Epiphanes*'—the Divine. But even his own followers mocked him as '*Antiochus Epimanes*'—the madman.

Jason and Menelaus

His Hebrew name was Joshua. But he changed his name, as did many among the Hellenists, to Jason. And he offered King Antiochus a generous bribe to depose the High Priest and appoint him to the coveted position. It was the beginning of the end to the integrity of the Temple Priesthood.

The 'High Priest' Jason erected a gymnasium near the Temple, and proceeded to corrupt his fellow Jews with pagan customs and licentious behavior. But before long, another Hellenized Jew, Menelaus, beat Jason at his own game and bought

the High Priesthood with an even bigger bribe—financed with the golden vessels pilfered from the Temple.

Jason then amassed an army and attacked Menelaus in the Holy City, massacring many of his own countrymen. Antiochus interpreted this civil squabble as a revolt against his throne, and sent his armies into Jerusalem, plundering the Temple and murdering tens of thousands of Jews. It was neither the first time, nor the last, that assimilation and strife brought calamity upon the Jewish people.



THE HISTORY OF CHANUKAH

The Turning Point

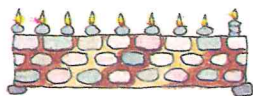
In every city and town, altars were erected with statues of the Greek gods and goddesses. Soldiers rounded up the Jews and forcibly compelled them to make offerings, and to engage in other immoral acts customary to the Greeks. As Antiochus' troops tightened their grip on the nation, the Jews seemed incapable of resistance.

It was in the small village of Modin, a few miles east of Jerusalem, that a single act of heroism turned the tide of Israel's struggle, and altered her destiny for all time. Mattityahu, patriarch of the priestly Hasmonean clan, stepped forward to challenge the Greek soldiers and those who acquiesced to their demands. Backed by his five sons, he attacked the troops, slew the idolators, and destroyed the idol. With a cry of *"All who are with G-d, follow me!"* he and a courageous circle of partisans retreated to the hills, where they gathered forces to overthrow the oppression of Antiochus and his collaborators.



Guerilla Warfare

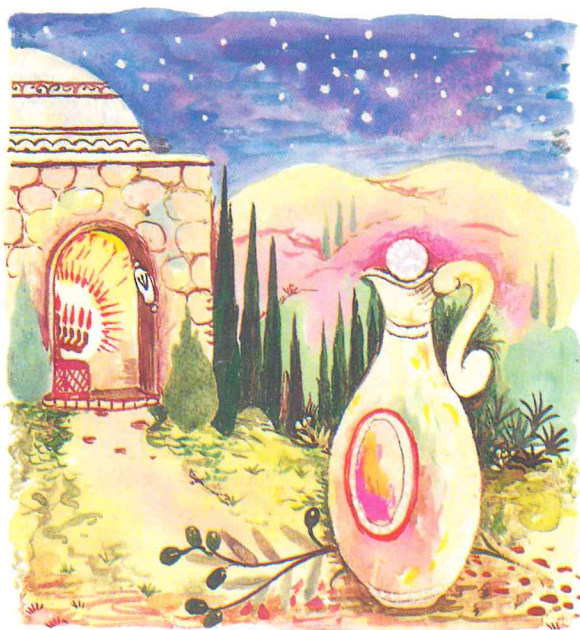
The army of Mattityahu, now under the command of his son Yehuda Maccabee, grew daily in numbers and in strength. With the Biblical slogan, *"Who is like unto Thee, O G-d,"* emblazoned on their shields, they would swoop down upon the Syrian troops under cover of darkness and scatter the oppressors, then return to their encampments in the hills. Only six thousand strong, they defeated a heavily armed battalion of forty-seven thousand Syrians.



THE HISTORY OF CHANUKAH

Enraged, Antiochus sent an even larger army against them, and in the miraculous, decisive battle at Bet Tzur, the Jewish forces emerged victorious. From there, they proceeded on to Jerusalem, where they liberated the city and reclaimed the Holy Temple. They cleared the Sanctuary of the idols, rebuilt the altar, and prepared to resume the Divine Service.

A central part of the daily service in the Temple was the kindling of the brilliant lights of the Menorah. Now, with the Temple about to be rededicated, only one small cruse of the pure, sacred olive oil was found. It was only one day's supply—and they knew it would take more than a week for the special process required to prepare more oil.



Undaunted, in joy and thanksgiving, the Macabees lit the lamps of the Menorah with the small amount of oil, and dedicated the Holy Temple anew. And miraculously, as if in confirmation of the power of their faith, the oil did not burn out—and the flames shone brightly for eight full days. The following year, our Sages officially proclaimed the festival of Chanukah as a celebration lasting eight days, in perpetual commemoration of this victory over religious persecution.



THE TEMPLE MENORAH

The Menorah

The seven-branched candelabrum which we call the Menorah was one of the sacred vessels of the Holy Temple, and a magnificent work of art. Its design, as commanded in the Book of Exodus, was extraordinary—as was the Divinely appointed manner of its construction. For the Menorah was not to be assembled from pieces, but was actually beaten from a single block of solid gold.

The 'Oneness' of the Menorah

Our sages have noted that the 'oneness' of the Menorah's construction symbolizes the essential unity of the Jewish people. Just as the Menorah has seven branches and seven separate lamps, there are numerous types of Jews. We differ in many ways—in our customs, our cultural milieu, our temperament. Yet in our basic 'substance', in our spiritual essence, we are one.



The Shape of the Menorah

The familiar image of the Menorah, with curved branches emanating from the center stem in a semi-circular design, is actually a misrepresentation. According

to Maimonides, the great codifier of Jewish Law, the branches of the Menorah extended straight out from the stem.

The earliest known example of the mistaken image of the Menorah is engraved on the Arch of Titus in Rome. The evil Titus was the Commander of the forces of the Roman Empire who sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the Second Temple. Titus carried off the Menorah as part of the spoils of his conquest. When the triumphal Arch was constructed to commemorate his victory, the Menorah figured prominently in its design, as a symbol of his subjugation of the Jews. Apparently, however, the Arch was built before he returned to Rome, and the Menorah was therefore inaccurately depicted.

The Oil

Only the purest of olive oils was used to kindle the Menorah. To begin with, the olives had to be grown on virgin soil, which had not been artificially fertilized or irrigated. The ripe olives, freshly picked from the highest branches of the tree, were gently squeezed until the first drops emerged—and only these first, clearest drops of oil could be used for the Menorah. The oil was stored in a secure place to ensure its ritual purity.

The Ner Maaravi

Each morning, a Priest would enter the Sanctuary and approach the Menorah to prepare the lamps for rekindling. Invariably, he would find one lamp still burning, while the other six had gone out. This was the *Ner Maaravi*, the western lamp. Though an equal amount of oil—enough to burn overnight—was always placed in each of the seven lamps, this western lamp miraculously burned on until the afternoon, when its flame was used to kindle the Menorah anew. The western lamp symbolizes the eternal presence of G-D in Israel's midst.



MENORAH KINDLING CALENDAR 5756-1995

How to Celebrate Chanukah

Kindle the Chanukah Menorah on each of the eight nights of Chanukah. For the dates and times see the 'Kindling Calendar'.




Use olive oil or paraffin candles—large enough to burn until half an hour after nightfall—for the lights of the Menorah.

Use a 'Shamesh' (service candle) to kindle the lights, and place it in its special place on the Menorah.

For the number of lights and the order of kindling—see the 'Kindling Calendar'.

Before kindling recite the blessings, and after kindling recite "*Hanairos hallolu...*"

All members of the family should be present at the kindling of the Chanukah lights. Have all young boys kindle their own Chanukah Menorahs and all young girls light their own Shabbat candles. Students and singles who live in a dormitory or in their own apartments, should kindle Menorahs in their own rooms.

	Sunday, Dec. 17 After Nightfall Blessings No. 1, 2 & 3
	Monday, Dec. 18 After Nightfall Blessings No. 1 & 2
	Tuesday, Dec. 19 After Nightfall Blessings No. 1 & 2

The Chanukah lights are kindled either in the front window or by a doorway.

On Friday afternoon the Chanukah lights (which will burn until ½ hour after nightfall) are kindled **before** the Shabbat candles are lit. From the time the Shabbat candles are lit until Shabbat ends and the Havdalah (separation between Shabbat and weekday) prayer is recited the Chanukah Menorah should not be relit, moved or prepared. **After** this time the Chanukah lights for Saturday night are kindled.



MENORAH KINDLING CALENDAR 5756-1995

Menorah Kindling Blessings*

Before kindling the lights, recite:

ברוך אתה יי, אלהינו מלך העולם,
אשר קדשנו במצותיו, וצננו:
להקליק גר חנוכה.

1

Bo-ruch A-toh Ado-noi E-lo-hei-nu
Me-lech Ho-olom A-she-r Ki-de-sho-nu
Be-mitz-vo-sov Ve-tzi-vo-nu Le-had-lik
Ner Cha-nu-kah.

Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, who has sanctified us by His commandments, and has commanded us to kindle the lights of Chanukah.

ברוך אתה יי, אלהינו מלך העולם,
שעשה נסים לאבותינו, בימים
ההם בזמן הזה.

2

Bo-ruch A-toh Ado-noi E-lo-hei-nu
Me-lech Ho-olom She-o-so Ni-sim
La-avo-sei-nu Ba-yo-mim Ho-heim
Bi-z'man Ha-zeh.

Blessed are you, L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, who wrought miracles for our fathers in days of old, at this season.

The following blessing is said only on the first evening (or the first time one kindles the lights this Chanukah):

ברוך אתה יי, אלהינו מלך העולם,
שהחיינו וקיימנו והצננו לזמן הזה.

3

Bo-ruch A-toh Ado-noi E-lo-hei-nu
Me-lech Ho-olom She-heche-yo-nu
Ve-ki-yi-mo-nu Ve-higi-o-nu
Liz-man Ha-zeh.

Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, who has kept us alive, and has preserved us, and enabled us to reach this season.

*These blessings are not considered Shames.

Shamesh
Wednesday, Dec. 20
After Nightfall
Blessings No. 1 & 2



Shamesh
Thursday, Dec. 21
After Nightfall
Blessings No. 1 & 2



Shamesh
Friday, Dec. 22
Before Shabbat
Candle Lighting
Blessings No. 1 & 2



Shamesh
Saturday, Dec. 23
After Shabbat ends &
Havdalah is recited
Blessings No. 1 & 2



Shamesh
Sunday, Dec. 24
After Nightfall
Blessings No. 1 & 2



After kindling the lights the following is recited:

הנרות הללו אנו מדליקין, על התשועות, ועל הנסים,
ועל הנפלאות, שעשית לאבותינו בימים ההם בזמן הזה,
על ידי כהניך הקדושים. וכל שמונת ימי חנוכה, הנרות
הללו קדש הם, ואין לנו רשות להשתמש בהן, אלא
לראותן בלבד, כדי להודות ולהלל לשמך הגדול, על
נסך ועל נפלאותיך, ועל ישועותיך:

We kindle these lights (to commemorate) the saving acts, miracles and wonders which You have performed for our forefathers, in those days at this time, through Your holy Kohanim. Throughout the eight days of Chanukah, these lights are sacred, and we are not permitted to make use of them, but only to look at them, in order to offer thanks and praise to Your great Name for Your miracles, for Your wonders and for Your salvations.





THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHANUKAH

Based on the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

At War with the Soul

King Antiochus was not out to annihilate the Jewish people (G-d forbid) or to enslave us, or drive us from our land. The Greeks were at war not with our *physical* existence, but with our *souls*. Their aim was to strip our way of life of its spirituality, of its holiness. It was acceptable, in the eyes of the Hellenists, for Jews to identify as Jews, and even to study Torah and do mitzvahs, provided that we were willing to forsake the *G-dliness* of Torah. The pragmatic materialism of Greek culture left no room for our special relationship with G-d.

This idea has particular significance in the modern world. Today, thank G-d, the majority of world Jewry lives in relative material comfort. Democratic society affirms our basic rights of survival, and many opportunities are available to Jews that were denied us in more oppressive times. These blessings, however, have also made it easy to overlook the very source of our strength as a people. Like the Hellenists of old, today's prevailing secular culture, with its emphasis on materialism and hedonism, can obscure the spiritual aspect of life.

The Chanukah lights are sacred. As we say in the prayer after lighting the menorah, "we are not permitted to make use of them - only to look at them, and offer thanks and praise... for Your miracles, for Your wonders, and for Your salvations." We affirm the supremacy of spiritual light over coarse materialism, of Divine wisdom over human limitations. We recognize that the world in which we live is not an end in itself, but exists to serve a higher spiritual purpose.

Illuminating the Darkness

A great Rabbi once remarked that "you cannot chase away darkness with a stick - you have to turn on the light." The way to eliminate darkness - to rid the world of ignorance, negativity, hatred and greed - is to kindle the lights of knowledge, generosity, hope, and love.

The Chanukah menorah is lit only after nightfall. This signifies that our purpose is to illuminate the darkness of this world, until the time when, as the Prophet says, "the world will be filled with the knowledge of G-d." It may be difficult for us to perceive G-dliness in our everyday lives. But Chanukah reminds



THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHANUKAH

us, even in our darkest moments, that the light of knowledge can shine brightly, that redemption is at hand, if we will kindle just one more lamp.

Spreading the Light

The menorah is lit either in the doorway, or in a front window, so that it can be seen outside in the street. This teaches that it is not enough to bring light into our own private domain. We must spread the light and warmth of Torah to the

outer environment as well, as far as our influence can reach.

Brighter and Brighter

Each night of Chanukah, we add another light to the menorah, until all eight lamps shine on the eighth night. This signifies that in matters of holiness, we must always be on the increase. With every added flame, we go from strength to strength in deepening our commitment to the values and traditions of our Jewish way of life.

Defiling the Oil

The Syrian-Greek desecration of the Holy Temple was another example of their determination to destroy the sanctity of Jewish life. The worship of one invisible, omnipotent G-d was replaced with the worship of pagan deities made in the image of man.

The Torah tells us that *"The soul of man is the lamp of G-d."* Just as oil permeates the olive, the Divine soul permeates the Jew; and just as the oil burning in the Menorah spreads light, the Jewish soul illuminates the world in the performance of good deeds. In defiling the sacred oil of the Menorah, the Greeks tried to destroy the Jewish soul.



One Cruse of Pure Oil

But the soul cannot be extinguished. Miraculously, despite the best efforts of the oppressors, one cruse of pure oil remained in the Temple—and one cruse was enough to rededicate the Temple and renew the holy task of spreading light throughout the world.



THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHANUKAH

Miracles For Today

The lights of the Chanukah menorah are more than simply a reminder of ancient miracles - they are meant to provide inspiration and illumination in our contemporary daily lives. In fact, in a very real sense, the Chanukah miracles of old are *re-enacted* in our observance today. That is one reason why we say, in the second blessing recited over the Chanukah lights, "...Blessed are You... who wrought miracles for our ancestors - in those days, **at this time.**" By reflecting upon the significance of the Chanukah miracles, we can see, with ever-increasing clarity, the miraculous dimension of events in our own time.

What is a Miracle?

Ordinarily, the routine of our day-to-day existence suggests that life is predictable, that events take place according to a natural order, a chain of cause and effect. We may not readily recognize that even "natural" phenomena are, in essence, evidence of the miraculous hand of G-d - until our hearts are stirred by a beautiful sunset, or a glimpse of wildflowers in bloom...

But there is another sort of miracle: an event so striking, so far beyond

rational explanation, that we cannot help but recognize it as miraculous. This is the kind of miracle that Chanukah calls to mind. When one day's supply of oil lasts eight full days, we sit up and take notice. When an ill-equipped handful of Maccabees succeeds in vanquishing all the assembled forces of a mighty Imperial oppressor, we realize that nothing is impossible for G-d.

Redemption, Against all Odds

In the time of King Antiochus, the fate of the Jewish people seemed grim indeed. The vastly outnumbered Maccabees were up against the world's most sophisticated military machine. They faced opposition from within, as well. Many of their brethren were meek, complacent, and all too willing to forsake their heritage and assimilate into the Hellenistic culture. It was the proverbial "darkest hour before the dawn." Yet, sure enough, with the dawn, came the miraculous, unprecedented victory. With G-d's help and against all odds, the Maccabees were able to reclaim the Holy Land and rededicate the Holy Temple.

Throughout the ages, Chanukah has signified the miraculous triumph of the weak over the strong, the pure



THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHANUKAH

over the impure, the righteous over the wicked. Whenever the integrity of the Jewish people is under siege, no matter how dark the night, the Chanukah lights proclaim with confidence that the dawn of deliverance is near.

The Ultimate Miracle

Today, the Chanukah lights have special relevance. Many among us despair of ever witnessing the dawn of redemption. After nearly two thousand years, it may seem that the cold, hard realities of exile have all but erased our age-old faith in the coming of Moshiach, who will lead us toward a perfect world. But Chanukah reminds us that G-d grants redemption in the blink of an eye - that the light of G-dliness can brighten even the darkest night.

With every lamp we kindle, with each good deed we do, we shed more light upon the world - and the darkness has already begun to disperse. Who could have imagined, a few short years ago, that communism would crumble, that entrenched totalitarian regimes would turn toward democracy, that hundreds of thousands of oppressed Jews would suddenly be free to emigrate to the Promised Land? Isaiah's Messianic prophecy was that the nations of the

world will "beat swords into plowshares." It's been our dream for centuries; it may well be tomorrow's headline.

Eight Days, Eight Lights

Our Sages explain that there is particular significance in the fact that the Chanukah menorah has *eight* lamps, and that we celebrate the Festival for *eight* days.

In the Holy Temple, the golden Menorah kindled each day in the Sanctuary had only seven lamps. The number seven represents the natural cycle of time: the seven days of the week, corresponding to the six days of Creation and the seventh, the Sabbath day. Throughout history, since G-d created the world, time has been measured according to this seven-day cycle.

The number eight, however, represents a level that is higher than nature, and above time. This is the level of the miraculous, which is not bound by the laws of nature. It is especially fitting that we celebrate the miracle of Chanukah with eight lamps, culminating on the eighth day... for the number eight is also associated with the revelation of Moshiach - may he come speedily, in our days!



SPECIAL CUSTOMS OF CHANUKAH

Special Prayers for Chanukah

During the eight days of Chanukah, we recite the "Al HaNissim" liturgy in the Amidah (Silent Prayer) for morning, afternoon, and evening, as well as in the Grace After Meals. In the morning service, we also say "Hallel"—songs of praise taken from the Psalms of David. In addition, there is a special reading from the Torah Scroll each morning in the synagogue.



Chanukah Gelt

On Chanukah, it is traditional to give all children Chanukah gelt (money). Of course, this beautiful custom adds to the children's happiness and festive spirit. In addition, it affords us an opportunity to give them positive reinforcement for exemplary behavior, such as diligence in their studies, and acts of charity.



Potato Latke Recipe

Because of the great significance of oil in the story of the Chanukah miracle, it is traditional to serve foods cooked in oil. Among the most popular Chanukah dishes is this recipe for delicious Potato Latkes.

- 5 large potatoes peeled
- 1 large onion
- 4 eggs
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup matzo meal
- 1 teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon pepper
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup oil for frying

Grate potatoes and onion on the fine side of grater, or in food processor or through blender with a little water added to it. Add eggs and mix well. Add matzo meal and seasoning and mix well. Heat oil in frying pan, then add mixture one tablespoon at a time into frying pan. When golden brown, turn over and brown on other side.



THE CHANUKAH DREIDEL

Playing Dreidel

The dreidel is a four-sided spinning top—also called a *s'vivon*, in Hebrew. On each side is a Hebrew letter: 'Nun', 'Gimel', 'Hay', and 'Shin'. The letters stand for the phrase "*Nes Gadol Hayah Sham—a great miracle happened there.*" It is traditionally used to play a lively Chanukah game.

Each player places some raisins, candies, or nuts into a kitty, and the players take turns spinning the dreidel. *Nun* means nothing—you win nothing, you lose nothing. *Gimel* means you take all. *Hay* means you win half of what is in the kitty. *Shin* means you lose, and must put more into the kitty.



The Origin of the Dreidel

The Syrians decreed that the teaching or studying of Torah was a crime punishable by death or imprisonment. But the children defiantly studied in secret; and when Syrian patrols were spotted, they would pretend to be playing an innocent game of dreidel.

HAPPY CHANUKAH

... and May this Festival of Lights
Bring Blessings upon You and All Your
Loved Ones for Happiness, for Health,
and for Spiritual & Material Wealth,
and May the Lights of Chanukah
Usher in the Light of Moshiach and
a Better World for All of Humankind.



15



HAPPY CHANUKAH!

